THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF LEXINGTON

Bishop's Customary for Visitations

INTRODUCTION The pastoral visit of all worshiping communities of the Diocese is among the principal responsibilities of my ministry. It offers opportunity to celebrate the ministry of your Faith Community and explore ways that my office can encourage and enrich that ministry; it reminds the local community of your connection to the wider church; and it highlights our shared mission as the Episcopal Church.

SCHEDULING VISITATIONS Pastoral visitations will be scheduled by the Bishop and sent out in advance. If there is particular pastoral need or a special celebration of the feast of title or other significant event in the life of the community, please let me know and we can try to make arrangements. Even with great care given to my visitation schedule, there will still be some need for flexibility. Pastoral emergencies may require rescheduling.

ONE WEEK PRIOR TO MY VISIT Please send the following to Melanie at our office.

A. Confirmation of the date of visit and a schedule of events.

B. The Pre-Visitation Questionnaire

C. A copy of your congregation's directory (if you have one).

D. A draft of your service bulletin for me for review.

THE DAY OF MY VISIT

I will preside at all your ordinary Sunday morning services, but please confirm this with me prior to the visit. If I spend the night, let's discuss the options for accommodations.

I. THE LITURGY OF THE DAY

a. General: While there will be unique elements in the service, the liturgy should not be significantly different in style from other Sundays. I want to worship the way you worship. All visitations will be celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. When there are no baptisms, confirmations, or receptions; the liturgy of the day during my visit should include the renewal of baptismal vows. This should be substituted for the Nicene Creed at all services, including Rite I.

b. Music: if there are baptisms or confirmations, DO NOT USE THE GLORIA although the rubrics allow it. I am excited to hear your choir, but with the inclusion of initiation rites, the liturgy is already long. Please select hymnody and anthems accordingly. If a hymn or anthem is sung before the Gospel, do not divide it up with some of the verses sung after the Gospel is read. There should be no division between the Gospel and sermon. A few things to let me know on the pre-visitation questionnaire are the local musical customs at the Offertory, Sanctus and Fraction Anthem.

c. The Propers of the Day: will be used. The Revised Common Lectionary is the norm in the Diocese. If you desire to use other readings, this must be cleared with me before the visitation. When there are Baptisms, the liturgical color will be white; if there are only confirmations/receptions, the color will be red. At all other times, it will be the appropriate color of the season.

d. Children: If baptisms are a part of my visitation, I ask that children remain/return to the church for that portion of the service. I will invite them to the font for the Baptism.
e. Offering: The undesignated offerings go to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund for support of emergencies and non-budgeted ministries that arise in the course of the year.
f. Eucharistic Prayer: I do not have a preference of which Eucharistic Prayer to use, but I would ask you to use a prayer from the BCP, not EOW. If there is a pastoral reason to use another liturgy, please clear it with me before the visit.
g. Silence: I will observe a brief time of silence: before the collect of the day; prior to the confession; at the breaking of the bread; and prior to the post-communion prayer. Noting this in the bulletin is helpful.
h. Assisting Clergy: Local clergy [deacon or priest] will share in the liturgy by performing the following duties: - Read the gospel - Make the necessary parish announcements including the offertory sentence - Set the table and mark the missal - Serve communion [I prefer there also to be laity serving communion] - Clear the table - Proclaim the dismissal.

II. WHEN THERE ARE BAPTISMS:

Every effort should be made to make the visitation a baptismal feast. As the space allows, the baptismal liturgy should unfold as follows:

a. A procession to the font of the assisting clergy, candidates and sponsors will follow the sermon
b. I will lead the presentation of the candidates, examination, and the baptismal covenant;
c. Someone appointed will lead the prayer for the candidates. These serve as the Prayers of the People for the Liturgy, so there should be no additional intercessions. If there are particular people or circumstances that need special intention, we will offer them at the altar prior to beginning the Great Thanksgiving
d. I will lead the thanksgiving over the water;
e. When there is a priest in residence, you will do the baptism; I will lead the prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and administer the chrismation; please notify me in advance if you need more chrism. Otherwise, I will anticipate an adequate supply.
f. The newly baptized will be presented to the congregation by the local clergy.

III. CONFIRMATION AND RECEPTION:

a. General I will sit for confirmations and celebrate from the center of the area in front of the chancel steps. Candidates will kneel with a kneeler at the steps, or stand, as suited to the space and the number of candidates being presented. This will be discussed beforehand.
b. Confirmation versus Reception With regard to confirmation, the Canons say the following: "It is expected that all adult members of this church after appropriate instruction, will have made a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their baptism and will have been confirmed or received by the laying on of hands, by a Bishop of this church or by a Bishop of a church in communion with this church. Those who have previously made a mature public commitment in another church may be received by the laying on of hands by a Bishop of this church rather than confirmed, "Title I Canon 17, Section 1c. The laying on of hands will be used for reception and reaffirmation as well as confirmation.

c. Confirmation is for:
    i. young persons who were baptized as children in the Episcopal Church or who came to this church with their families before making a "mature commitment". The age of young people being presented for confirmation is at the discretion of the local clergy. I prefer that teenagers be at least 15 years old. Canonical membership is age 16.
    ii. newly baptized adults should receive the laying on of hands by the Bishop at the earliest opportunity following their baptism, and - adults of any age who are making a mature commitment for the first time.
d. Reception is for: those who have previously made a mature commitment in any other Christian church
e. Reaffirmation is for: those who are already Episcopalians who attend the same, or equal, formation as those being presented for confirmation and reception.

IV. **LITURGICAL NOTES:** At the Presentation of Candidates, please present each candidate by his/her full Christian name and the particular rite being administered. To identify candidates, name tags are preferable to cards. Name tags should also have a letter indicating whether they are to be confirmed, received, or reaffirmed ("C", "R", or "A") and the persons preferred pronouns. As a sign of your part in their formation, priests, deacons, and lay presenters should join in the laying on of hands by standing behind the candidates and laying their hands on their shoulders or backs. If there are to be presentations of gifts to the newly confirmed, received, or reaffirmed, please have that scheduled for after the Peace and before the Offertory. I will use chrism for confirmation.

V. **FORUMS AND GATHERINGS** My preference is to combine meetings with those being confirmed, received, or reaffirmed into a general parish forum. I want to get to know the whole community. It is my hope to have a conversation that will involve both those making a public act of faith AND the established members. If you have a particular subject (liturgy, scripture, diocesan vision, etc.) or circumstance that you feel would be helpful for me to address as a forum topic, let's talk about that during our phone conversation.

VI. **VESTRY MEETING** One of the most important components of my visit is meeting with the Vestry. It underscores our shared leadership in the local congregation and the Diocese. I am open to design the conversation that will be most helpful and appropriate to your community in the carrying out of its Gospel mission. If, for example, there are particular ministry opportunities, possibilities, dreams, challenges, or concerns that the clergy and Vestry wish to share, the conversation can certainly be structured accordingly. This meeting should be arranged at a time that works best with the overall flow of the Sunday events but should not take the place of my time for formation with the candidates and/or another Sunday morning event. It is expected that this meeting will last no more than an hour. This meeting can be scheduled with a light Sunday lunch, or on Saturday evening. In some cases, it may be possible, and even advisable, to schedule a meeting with the vestry at another time in proximity to the visitation. This should be discussed and decided at least two weeks prior to the visitation, in order to arrange the details through my office and secure a date and time on my calendar.

VII. **RECORDS AND SIGNING CERTIFICATES/BCPS** It is my responsibility to review the following: - Sacramental books (baptisms, confirmations, marriages, burials), - Parish service register, and - Date of last audit and associated management letter. Upon your request, I will bring signed book plates to be used inside Prayer Books.

VIII. **TIME WITH CLERGY** I am very interested in maintaining a strong pastoral relationship with clergy and families. Since visitations are primarily a community-focused event, I invite and encourage you to make appointments with me on weekdays as needed or desired, or, if you're distant from Lexington, perhaps a dinner on the evening before my visitation. In such cases, I will stay at a nearby hotel or with you, if appropriate.

IX. **PHOTOGRAPHY** Please appoint someone from the congregation to take photos during the visitation. It is important to me that a group photograph of those presented for initiation also be sent to me afterwards.

X. **FOLLOWING THE VISIT** There are three important tasks to complete and forward to my office after my visitation:

1. Return your completed Confirmation Form to the Office of the Bishop.
2. Send a few photos taken during the visitation
3. Send in your offering for my discretionary fund.

1/27/2025